

To the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Orchid Deer Dalomba and I am a parent of two children (4th & 7th Grade) who currently attend the Mary Hooker Environmental Magnet School (EMS). My children have attended EMS for the past six years, and during this time they have received vital before & after school service, as well as attend the summer programs through the Organized Parents Make a Difference (OPMAD) program. They are very happy at OPMAD and feel safe and comfortable with the staff. This program is like a home away from home to them during the extremely long, five day school week.

My children have also been fortunate (over the past five years in the program) to have had the combined support of both institutions (EMS & OPMAD) in promoting and nurturing their overall growth and development. In addition my family and many other families benefit from the affordable, engaging and reliable summer program.

To have affordable, convenient, and reliable childcare is critical to our family, as we (like many families today) are a dual income household. In addition, my husband and I have found it even more critical for our family's particular needs to have one of us work part-time; in order to be more present and available to our children during these critical and sometimes challenging developmental years of their lives. This decision has significantly impacted our household income, but was the right choice for our family. My husband initially volunteered with OPMAD to offer support to the OPMAD summer program, and to be available and visible to our children. After that summer, he was offered a part-time position with OPMAD. He accepted, and has been happy with being able to support the developmental needs of our children and the financial needs of our family via this program. That said, our family's needs are deeply rooted in OPMAD. Losing this program would be clearly disruptive to our family in a variety of ways.

Please know that OPMAD is a critical component of my children's education and care. My husband and I hope that you will also see the tremendous value that OPMAD brings to so many people in this community and will continue to fund this program. Without it, I fear that a magnet school education at Mary Hooker Environmental might not be feasible for many families, including ours. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about our experience with OPMAD.

Sincerely,

Orchid Deer Dalomba

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